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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1239
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1081
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 0589
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001846

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: CEP AND MINUSTAH DISAGREE ON ELECTION DATE

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Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Thomas C. Tighe for reason 1.4(d).

11. (C) Summary: The GoH has issued the decree, dated August 31, establishing municipal, local, and the remainder of legislative elections on December 3. MINUSTAH staff and Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) staff sharply disagreed, however, on the state of elections preparations at a September 22 meeting with elections donors hosted by the Canadian Ambassador. Though MINUSTAH technicians argued that December 3 was logistically impossible, CEP President Max Mathurin insisted that with negotiation and diligence a December 3 election was possible. CEP Director General Jacques Bernard on September 25 assured Polcouns that the CEP was fully prepared to hold elections, and that he had deliberately excluded MINUSTAH elections chief Gerardo Lechevallier from CEP planning. He admitted that electoral logistics (transport of election materials and results) and security were beyond his control, and he would accept whatever final decision taken by the GoH. President Preval's signature is on the August 31 decree, but SRSB Mulet, responding to Preval's directive to focus on security in Port-au-Prince will not commit necessary resources to the elections unless Preval offers specific guidance on the elections. Additionally, the EU, the other significant electoral donor in addition to the U.S. and Canada, will likely not fully commit its budget support until MINUSTAH and the CEP resolve their differences. End Summary.

Logistics

12. (U) During the September 22 meeting, Carlos Currie, Chief of Operations and Deputy of the MINUSTAH Electoral Assistance Section (EAS), said that they would need 78 days from September 25 to produce and disseminate the ballots properly. Felix Ortega, the technical expert at OAS, agreed that a December 3 election would make a very tight timeline. Currently, OAS is working with the CEP on verifying the candidates list and ballot layout. However, Mathurin, during the meeting, stated that candidate list and ballot layout would be completed over the weekend.

Money

¶3. (U) According to Currie, only \$4 million of the promised \$12 million from the international community has been received. He thought that the ballot process could begin with these funds. However, Runn Skinnebach, economic officer for the EU, said that the lack of consensus on the electoral calendar sends a negative message to EU capitals and made it difficult to justify disbursement of funds.

¶4. (U) UNDP electoral fund manager Mohamed Hassen explained that the 2006-2007 electoral budget currently anticipates a 3-month cycle to recruit and pay the poll workers. This does not include the departmental (BED) and local (BEC) employees of the CEP. BED and BEC employees are currently paid from the \$3 million in savings from the first two elections. However, UNDP needs donor authorization to continue paying the BED and BEC employees if the election is to be held in February 2007. Donors present requested a working plan and chronogram from CEP justifying BED and BEC payment. Mathurin replied that the workers must remain employed because they are in the field working with the political parties, identifying misplaced voters (verifying names and addresses), and maintaining electoral equipment.

Security

¶6. (U) Canadian Ambassador Claude Boucher stated that SRSG Edmond Mulet thought that security provisions in the provinces by December 3 would be impossible. Given this, he wondered if CEP wanted to maintain the December date. (Note: Mulet on September 21 repeated his concerns to Polcouns at an embassy reception: as a result of Preval's push for security in Port-au-Prince, SRSG Mulet had redeployed several contingents from the countryside. Mulet had told Preval that MINUSTAH could "not guarantee either logistics or security

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for December 3." End Note.)

CEP insists on December 3 elections

¶7. (SBU) Mathurin insisted that elections should be held as announced on December 3 because the "political implications to suspending elections are too great." He reminded attendees that MINUSTAH, the OAS, and the donors had agreed to the December date with the GoH at an August 9 meeting with Prime Minister Alexis. He admitted that there are some technical and budgetary challenges. The CEP might, for instance, need to find another printer if the price remains at the current level. Through negotiation and diligence, he claimed, this problem could be solved. Mathurin shrugged off the need for correcting the candidates' list, as "a small detail. A few names here and there must be changed."

¶8. (SBU) On security, he countered that SRSG Mulet was involved in the August 9 meeting when the election date was set and should be prepared to make good on his commitments. Moreover, Mathurin complained that SRSG Mulet had not raised his concerns with the CEP. (Note: Mulet was not present at the August 9 meeting although then PDSRSG Larry Rossin attended. Mulet had, in fact, briefed Jacques Bernard on his concerns before meeting with Preval on September 7 to recommend postponing elections. End Note.) He chastised the participants, stating that the international community would not take the political backlash from postponement of the elections, it would be the CEP. Mathurin took to the airwaves the following day, proclaiming to journalists that "the CEP is ready for the December 3 elections, but we are not responsible for the funding that has not arrived. Technically, we are prepared."

What the Director General Thinks

¶9. (C) Jacques Bernard also dismissed MINUSTAH's technical objections during a private meeting with Polcouns on September 25. Bernard stated that it had become impossible to work with MINUSTAH elections chief Gerardo Lechevallier because of his "political interference." and he had excluded Lechevallier from the planning process. The CEP had resolved all of the issues that Gerardo and his staff had raised: they would complete the final verification of candidates the following morning and they had already prepared sample ballots. Bernard believed that Lechevallier continued to raise "red herrings" because he wanted to reopen voter and candidate registration and include constitutional referenda in the elections. Bernard allowed that MINUSTAH would have to provide logistical and security support. If the GoH decided that MINUSTAH's security commitments in Cite Soleil were a higher priority than the elections, and thus elections must be postponed, he would accept the decision. The Preval administration had not, however, announced any decision to postpone elections.

¶10. (C) Comment. MINUSTAH has done a better job in recent weeks advocating for a postponement than Bernard and the CEP have in arguing in favor of December 3. Though Mathurin's defense of December 3 was surprisingly vigorous (Mathurin has hardly expressed a strong view on anything during his tenure as president) he does not have sufficient command of the issues to effectively counter MINUSTAH arguments. EU representative Skinnebach stated to Polcouns during a later conversation that he would not recommend disbursement without clear agreement between the CEP and MINUSTAH. Bernard indicated that he would soon launch his own campaign to publicize the work done by the CEP to prepare for December 3. Ultimately, however, President Preval's government will have to give guidance to MINUSTAH on their role in supporting logistics and security in order for all of the electoral players to consider options and agree on and implement a viable electoral timetable. End Comment.
TIGHE